

Hilary Weatherhead 1926 – 31 March 2011

Hilary Weatherhead, who died on 31 March 2011, aged 85, was elected to the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria in October 1975, and quickly involved herself in the activities of the Club. As a botanist, she joined the Botany Group, of which she was Chairperson for eight years, between 1981 and 1989; a committee member for another year; and briefly, in 1993, joint secretary. Between 1981 and 1996 she gave 19 talks to the Botany Group, on topics as diverse as plants of the southern Dandenongs, the Darling Range and Sand Plains of Western Australia, to the Swiss Alps and Kashmir. She also led excursions to various parts of Victoria, including Warburton, French Island, Black Rock (seaweeds), Mt Donna Buang, French Island and the Upper Thomson.

In the 1980s the Botany Group undertook the conservation of Courtney's Road, Belgrave South, where there was a significant collection of orchids in the roadside vegetation, and Hilary, together with Ilma Dunn and other group members, was very active in this project, and reported regularly on progress there. She also contributed to General Meetings, with talks, exhibits and nature notes. These talks dealt with plants in particular localities, such as Willsmere Park, and in different habitats. The effect of drought on plants, and their regeneration after bushfires, particularly after Ash Wednesday, were other topics.

Hilary developed a keen interest in fungi, and it is in this capacity that she is most remembered. Her talk to the Botany Group in May 1991 was entitled 'An introduction to fungi', and many people will remember going on excursions with her, some of which she led. As a novice I remember asking her on one excursion how she remembered all the names and distinguishing features of the many and diverse

species, to which she replied encouragingly 'Every time a little more sticks!' In 1989 she exhibited a fungus she had found in Sherbrooke Forest, thought to be a rare species of *Mutinus*. This was later confirmed as *Mutinus certus*, a sub-tropical species. After she and husband Peter retired to the Dandenongs she became known locally as 'the fungi lady of Emerald', always ready to identify specimens or photos.

As well as contributing so much in her own particular field, Hilary undertook other responsibilities within the Club. She was a member of Council from 1980 to 1984 and, following the crisis of the sudden resignation of both the Editor and Sub-editor of *The Victorian Naturalist*, she willingly became a member of the administrative committee created to keep the journal appearing until another editor was appointed. She held the position of Programme Secretary, responsible for arranging speakers for the monthly General Meetings. This was a task Hilary carried out most conscientiously, not only making sure that we had an interesting and varied programme throughout the year, but also that the people invited were good speakers. On one occasion she was very anxious because she did not know anything about the speaker. She need not have worried. We had one of the most fascinating evenings, on the subject of eels!

Hilary also served as a member of the Award Committee for the Australian Natural History Medallion from 1986 to 1990.

I am indebted to Jill Weatherhead for information about Hilary's reputation in Emerald.

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